1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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623 554 economic control which he exercises, by granting him access to special economic resources (above all, fruit-bearing trees) unattainable to the other members of his group. Thus supported, the titled family head is qualified to assume his double role, as official agent of the community at large and as representative of his group *vis-à-vis* the village community.

The relation between the two roles and their relative preponderance varies with the rank which an elder may attain. For the *nūsa* ranks are not of equal order. They are defined by strict order of precedence, and there is never any doubt which title ranks higher or lower. The measure of political responsibility closely corresponds to the place in the scale of village ranks. In some villages we even find a formal distinction between the 'great' and 'small' ranks, the former three or (more often) four in number, forming as it were the 'inner council'. Where the village is arranged in a number of separate large clusters of compounds (as in Doko, Kutigi, or Sakpe), the distinction between 'great' and 'small' ranks also implies a distinction between headship over the whole cluster of compounds, the *efu*, and headship over single compounds or 'houses' only.[1] The professional ranks of blacksmiths and drummers are always at the bottom of the list of village ranks. The political importance of the rank of the Head of the Hunters and of the ranks which are combined with priestly offices differs in different communities.

623 It would be wrong to think of the village council of elders as of an elaborate, rigidly formalized, instrument of government. The full council is rarely summoned except on important occasions, such as the election of a chief, or the visit of the *Etsu* and his delegates or the District Officer. The normal routine work of village government is carried on by the chief and his 'inner council' of two or three elders of highest rank. And here again we have no formal appointed assembly, but rather casual meetings in the houses of the chief or of one of the elders, at which current questions are discussed and the necessary decisions taken. If more elders have to be consulted or instructed, a messenger will be sent to their houses, or they will call individually at the house of the chief or the head *nūsa*. If in the case of the *nūsaži* of high rank their position of authority transcends the component groups to the headship of which they have risen in virtue of their kinship position, this latter aspect preponderates in the case of the *nūsaži* of lesser rank who are excluded from the 'inner council'. They are executive organs of the village in the indirect sense of intermediaries through whom decisions of the chief and the leading elders reach the various kinship and local groups, and through whom, in turn, these groups can voice claims and interests so far as they call for action on the part of the community.

623 554 184 The graded scale of village ranks does not command an unequivocal corresponding system of appointment and succession. Succession to the lowest, professional, ranks is invariably hereditary. So is succession to the priestly ranks or the ranks linked with a priestly office: the secret

[801] [1] In eastern Nupe, especially among Dibo and Beni, the number four plays an important part in the arrangement of *efu* as well as in the order of ranks. We find four *efu* and four ranks, or four head ranks and four secondary ranks, or four ranks plus the chief's rank.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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discussed elsewhere.[1] Let us, then, turn back to Nupe religion and summarize its character or 'type' on the lines of our list of competences.

2. *Weltbild*: MORALITY

Nupe religion offers practically no cosmological knowledge; what there is of it is conveyed only by the doctrine and not, symbolically, by ritual. There is no interest in any far-flung picture of the universe such as a detailed mythology might present, nor in any closely reasoned account, the 'supplements' of rational knowledge being restricted to positing a remote, vague creator and enumerating a few of his creations. And here speculation stops at the phenomena intimately affecting human life (health and disease, procreation and death, dreams, certain features of inanimate nature). The rest is simply tacitly accepted. Nor are there attempts to interpret the world in anthropomorphous terms and so bring it nearer to human comprehension. The only link between man and this featureless transcendental world, apart from the supernatural controls somehow placed at his command, is vouchsafed by the belief in reincarnation and in an eternally active life principle. The humanly appealing theme of an other-worldly life is left untouched.

The language in which all this is conveyed is the familiar language of everyday life, simple and intentionally clear. Where the vagueness of the subject precludes satisfactory precision, there is recourse either to a simple 'we don't know' or to attempts at exploring linguistic meanings. The former does not imply any suggestion of a relevant mystery behind the visible world, but merely the placid admission of things unknowable. The latter betrays the conviction that the knowledge about the world, such as it is, is meant to be clear and can be clarified if the workaday tool of language is only carefully examined. This aimed-at clarity is further suggested by the predilection for parables and analogies, for juxtaposition or opposition, and by the many enumerations by twos and fours which pervade the doctrine.

This schematicism is essentially abstract, involving no visual or similarly palpable aids, such as an alignment with colours or spatial orientations. Nor are these invested with symbolic meaning save in a few isolated instances (when black stands for secrecy and evilness, red for prosperity, and right and left for male and female respectively). Enumeration again serves only to order things schematically and clearly, the symbolic potentialities of numbers being ignored: thus there are no lucky or unlucky numbers, no numbers in any other way meaningful (save, in a crude form, in divination).

[1] See my *Foundations*, pp. 256–7 *et seq.*